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SAN DIEGO, CALIF., MARCH 24 (UPI)--HERBERT G. KLEIN, PRESS SECRETARY TO RICHARD M. NIXON DURING THE 1960 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, SAID TODAY HE BELIEVED ONE OF THE DECIDING FACTORS IN NIXON'S DEFEAT WAS HIS DESIRE TO KEEP THE SECRET OF CUBAN INVASION PLANS.

KLEIN, EDITOR OF THE SAN DIEGO UNION, SAID IN A STORY APPEARING IN SUNDAY EDITIONS OF THE UNION THAT NIXON IN EFFECT WAS "CLUBBED" WITH HIS OWN WEAPON BECAUSE HE DECIDED NOT TO MAKE CUBAN INTERVENTION A CAMPAIGN ISSUE.

"CERTAINLY IN RETROSPECT IT WAS ONE OF THE DECISIVE FACTORS IN WHAT WAS THE CLOSEST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS OF MODERN HISTORY," KLEIN SAID.

HE SAID THAT NIXON HAD WANTED TO MAKE CUBAN INTERVENTION A CAMPAIGN ISSUE BUT DID NOT DO SO FOR SECURITY REASONS. WHEN KENNEDY CAME OUT FOR CUBAN INTERVENTION, KLEIN SAID, NIXON HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ARGUE AGAINST HIM "AND THUS AGAINST A POLICY HE PREVIOUSLY ORIGINATED HIMSELF."

THE EDITOR SAID ONLY FOUR MEMBERS OF THE NIXON STAFF SHARED THE SECRET THAT REFUGEES WERE BEING TRAINED FOR AN EVENTUAL ASSAULT ON CASTRO AND A RETURN TO CUBA, AND THEY HAD STERN INSTRUCTIONS NOT TO TALK ABOUT THIS. HE SAID THAT DESPITE MANY TEMPTATIONS, THEY PROTECTED THE SECURITY BY REMAINING SILENT.

"FOR A LONG TIME AS WE CAMPAIGNED ACROSS THE COUNTRY WE HELD THE HOPE THAT THE TRAINING WOULD GO RAPIDLY ENOUGH TO PERMIT THE BEACH LANDING," KLEIN CONTINUED.

"THE DEFEAT OF CASTRO WOULD HAVE BEEN A POWERFUL FACTOR FOR RICHARD NIXON AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE TO REVEAL THAT THE VICE PRESIDENT QUITE EARLY (IN 1959) HAD IN A MEMO TO THE WHITE HOUSE ANALYZED CASTRO AS 'EITHER INCREDIBLY NAIVE ABOUT COMMUNISM OR UNDER COMMUNIST DISCIPLINE.'

"WE COULD ALSO HAVE TOLD OF HIS ROLE IN URGING THE TOUGHER POLICY ON CUBA WHICH LED TO THE TRAINING OF REFUGEES. BUT THE TRAINING DIDN'T GO RAPIDLY ENOUGH FOR A PRE-ELECTION LANDING AND MILITARY SECURITY WAS OBVIOUSLY MORE IMPORTANT TO THE VICE PRESIDENT THAN POLITICS."

KLEIN SAID THE NIXON STAFF HEARD THE RUMOR THAT THE KENNEDY STAFF FEARED THE BEACH ASSAULT WOULD TAKE PLACE BEFORE THE ELECTION AND SUSPECTED THIS WAS THE REASON FOR KENNEDY'S PROPOSAL ON OCT. 20 FOR DIRECT INTERVENTION IN CUBA.

HE SAID THE KENNEDY PROPOSAL DIRECTLY OUTLINED THE EXACT PROGRAM WHICH WAS BEING CARRIED OUT AND WHICH THE NIXON STAFF HAD FOR SECURITY REASONS KEPT SECRET.

THIS ISSUE WAS DISCUSSED BRIEFLY IN NIXON'S RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOK, "SIX CRISES," AND DISPUTED THIS PAST WEEK BY PRESIDENT KENNEDY.

"THE STORY WE WANTED TO TELL DURING THE CAMPAIGN WAS THAT OF MR. NIXON'S ORIGINAL 1959 MEMO REGARDING CASTRO'S COMMUNIST DISCIPLINE," KLEIN SAID. "WE WANTED TO FOLLOW THIS WITH MR. NIXON'S STATEMENT CALLING FOR A TOUGHER POLICY LEADING TO THE RETURN OF REFUGEES TO THEIR HOMELAND AND THE OUSTER OF CASTRO."

"AS IT WORKED OUT THE STORY WAS IN REVERSE. MR. KENNEDY, WHO EARLIER HAD DESCRIBED CASTRO AS 'PART OF THE LEGACY OF BOLIVAR,' LATER RECOGNIZED THE CUBAN MENACE AND WAS ABLE TO CAPITALIZE ON IT IN THE PUBLIC EYE AS FIGHTING FOR A TOUGHER CUBAN POLICY."

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